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RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY  
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 8707  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 2107  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4786  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1332  
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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2444  
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - IRAQ - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Tuesday morning's Yomiuri front-paged a GOJ plan to extend the Air Self-Defense Force mission in Iraq, which is to expire December 14, until July 31, 2007.

¶1. "Hussein's Death Sentence: Will It Inflamm Sectarian Conflict?" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri editorialized (11/7): "Saddam Hussein will be hanged, but it is questionable whether this will have a positive impact on the reconstruction of Iraq.... We are concerned that the death sentence will end up adding fuel to the prolonged sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites. The targets of violence have already expanded to include ordinary citizens not affiliated with any political organizations, with more than 1,200 Iraqis killed last month alone. The Maliki government needs to look squarely at this reality.... As the case involves a death sentence, it will automatically be appealed according to law. The Iraqi government must refrain from fanning a 'war of revenge.'... Amidst the current situation, though, there is a faint ray of hope in Iraq. The government, backed by the Arab League, is preparing for a 'reconciliation conference' that would include rival groups, including armed Sunni factions.... It is imperative that the Iraqi government move steadily in the direction of national unity and isolate international terrorist groups. The international community should reaffirm the importance of giving long-term support to Iraq."

¶2. "Hussein's Death Sentence: Questions Remain" An editorial in the liberal Asahi commented (11/7): "An Iraqi special tribunal has sentenced Saddam Hussein to death. Although the sentence has not been finalized, as an appeal is pending, the outcome will probably remain

unchanged.... Was it mere happenstance that the verdict was handed down just days before the US midterm elections? The present Shiite-dominated Iraqi government is finding it difficult to deal with the deteriorating security situation. Is it trying to demoralize the Sunnis by condemning the former president to death?... It is a plain fact that the USG gave military and economic support to Iraq until just before the 1991 Gulf War as part of the US policy to contain Iran. The oil strategies of major nations intersect in the Middle East. The trial of Hussein would be more meaningful if the court would also shed light on these aspects in order to prevent the appearance of another monster like Hussein."

SCHIEFFER